

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1. Prior to his present assignment as USSR Minister of Defense, Marshal Georgiy K. Zhukov has never occupied a position of great responsibility in the CPSU or the Soviet Government. He has known how to keep out of political intrigue and his career has not been connected in any particular way with the careers of the most prominent political leaders. This is true despite the coincidence, in 1946, of Zhukov's fall from favor and G. M. Malenkov's temporary eclipse. However, this coincidence could be explained by the fact that both men had a common enemy in the late Andrey A. Zhdanov.
2. Zhukov's fall came in March 1946, when he was recalled from his position as Supreme Commander in Berlin. The glory which Zhukov had won was threatening the prestige of Stalin himself and had also provoked the jealousy of Zhdanov and A. M. Vasilyevskiy. The occasion for his disgrace was provided by the treason trial of General Andrey A. Vlasov. "Forty friendly generals" were to have aided Vlasov in a coup d'etat against the Stalin regime, and among them Zhukov was at the head. This affair did not have immediate consequences so far as Zhukov was concerned, although it did seriously undermine his position, and Zhdanov and Vasilyevskiy openly sided against him. Shortly afterwards K. Ye. Voroshilov proposed Zhukov's recall from Berlin. On 22 March 1946 the Politburo approved a decision to recall him on the ground that he could no longer be trusted.
3. Three of the current Soviet leaders have in the past had reasons for disagreement with Zhukov. They are Bulganin, Vasilyevskiy, and Voroshilov. In the case of Bulganin, the reason lies in Zhukov's bitter criticism, in 1940, of the system of political commissars in the Soviet Armed Forces. In the case of Voroshilov, it is to be noted that it was Voroshilov who proposed Zhukov's recall in 1946. Finally, Vasilyevskiy has had differences with Zhukov on several occasions, both in 1946 and later. One such difference was in regard to the credit given for the wartime victory at Stalingrad. It was to Zhukov that Stalin had entrusted the task of drawing up the plans for the defense of Stalingrad; however, immediately after the war, in order to lessen Zhukov's prestige, the credit for these plans came to be attributed to Stalin and to Vasilyevskiy.

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4. It should be pointed out, however, that among the three leaders who have had reasons for disagreement with Zhukov, Bulganin is the one who has distinguished himself for his tact and unusual ability in winning the good will of his subordinates in all of the various jobs he has performed. It is said that Stalin made Bulganin Minister of Armed Forces in 1947 because he believed that Bulganin knew how to keep marshals and generals content and at bay.
5. It may be that Zhukov has been made Minister of Defense in order to assure the new Soviet Government the support of the country's military personnel. He may also have been appointed because of the fact that he has not been clearly associated in any particular way with such current leading powers as Khrushchev and Bulganin. These reasons and Zhukov's own popularity in his country may well explain how he rose in power over his constant competitor Vasilyevskiy, who collaborated for many years with Bulganin; over I. S. Konev, who has remained tied in allegiance to Khrushchev; and over V. D. Sokolovskiy and the other marshals. There is no doubt, also, that Zhukov was appointed to his post for the purpose of making evident to the West, and to the United States especially, that the Soviets are decidedly against Western European Union and German rearmament. Zhukov's appointment must also have been intended to prove the Kremlin's intransigence in regard to the maintenance of the positions which the Soviets have won in Central Europe.
6. One cannot hypothesize as to how broad Marshal Zhukov's powers in the management of the Soviet Armed Forces actually are, or as to what use he is able to put his ministerial authority. One may be sure, however, that he will be continuously controlled both from above, by the two Presidiums,¹ and from below, by his deputy ministers and the other marshals.

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1. Comment. referring to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers.

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